



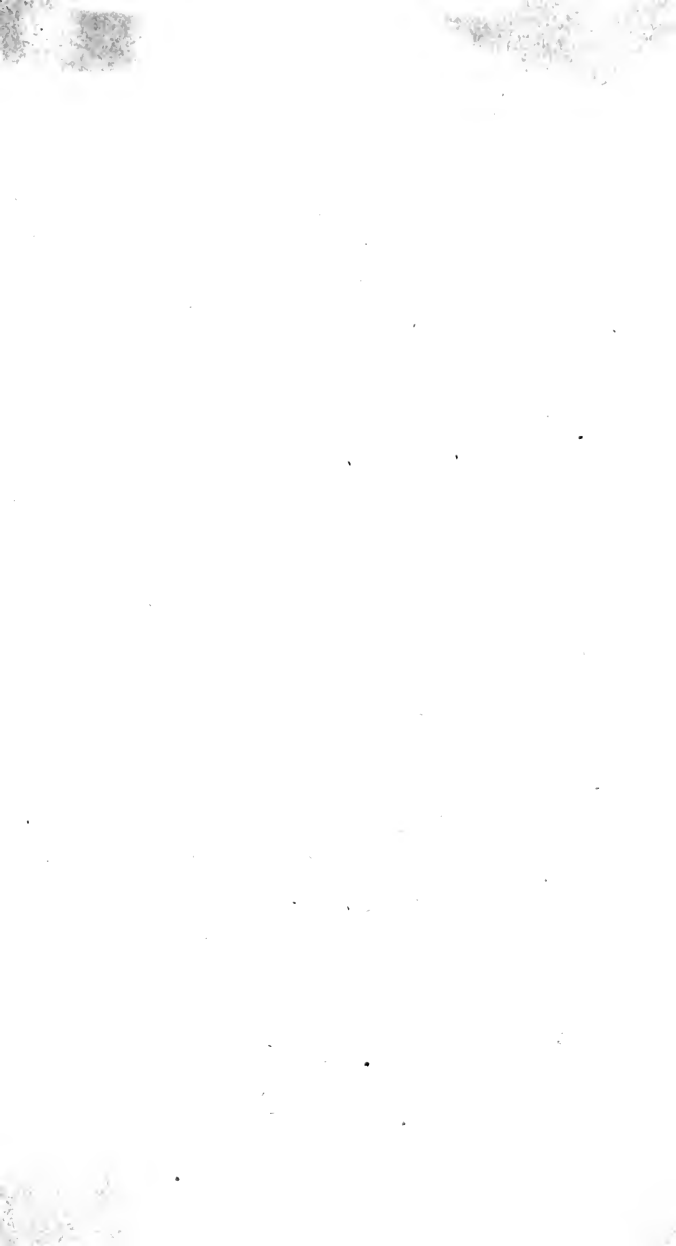
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A CRY

FROM

THE DESERT.

· BEHOLD, THE BRIDEGROOM COMETH. ·

PHILADELPHIA :

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A CRY FROM THE DESERT.

"There shall come in the last days *scoffers*, walking after their own lusts (inclinations), and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."—2 PET. iii. 3. 4.

"Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them."—ISAI. xlii. 9.

"Who will hearken and hear for the time to come?"—ISAI. xlii. 23.

"So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye, that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand."—LUKE xxi. 31.

"Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read."—ISAI. xxxiv. 16.

"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand."—REV. i. 3.

"Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off. Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, There shall none of my words be prolonged any more; but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord God."—EZEKIEL xii. 27, 28.

"To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it."—JER. vi. 10.

"THOU WAST ALTOGETHER BORN IN SINS, AND DOST THOU TEACH US?"

..... "ONE THING I KNOW, THAT, WHEREAS I WAS BLIND, NOW I SEE;"
—John ix. 34, 25.

Aquila. Well, Philander, as we have now once again taken up our residence in the country, and are free from all the tumult and confusion of town, I hope you will allow me to refer to the subject which appears to have absorbed so much of your time and attention,—the study of the prophetic Scriptures, to which, as I have before hinted, I think you attach undue importance. I have, on a former occasion, expressed my opinion, that the Christians of the present day have little interest in the Prophecies: indeed, I am persuaded it never was the design of Providence, that the mysteries which the prophetic writings contain should ever become the subject of curious research. It appears to me, that the spirit with which the subject is now prosecuted is little short of impiety: "Secret things belong unto God."

Philander. I am fully aware, Aquilla, of the host of objections with which I have to contend, whilst defending the study of that portion of Holy Writ which, if I am not mistaken, has not only proved a source of the most gratifying occupation to my mind, but which has materially tended to wean my thoughts and affections from the delusive and unsubstantial "things" which are "visible," and to fix them on those "things" which, although *invisible*, alone deserve the name of reality. I will candidly confess, that I have always felt, and still feel, much hesitation in entering into argument upon this subject, even with you: for, although it would be difficult for me to convey, in adequate terms, the astonishing force with which these glorious truths impressed my mind, yet I felt so deeply my own general incapacity to cope with you in argument—and as I learnt, so in proportion was I convinced of my utter ignorance of Divine things—that I ever felt disposed to evade the question: but I can assure you, that as I become acquainted with its mysteries, so are the eyes of my understanding opened as respects the true meaning of Scripture.

Aquilla. I acknowledge I have allowed myself to view the peculiar doctrines which are advocated by a certain party in some respects as a "new light;" and my prejudices, if you please, immediately rise against innovations in our generally received faith on the grand doctrines of religion.

Philander. I am as jealous as you express yourself to be, of any "new system;" but I think it would be found an easy task to prove, that those views of Scripture which you term a "new light" was the lamp which burned bright and clear in the first and purest ages of the Christian church, the realization of which was the grand hope of the Apostles and Martyrs; the theme upon which they constantly discoursed, and which supported them in their severest trials;—the coming of our Lord, "and the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy Prophets since the world began." (Acts iii. 21.)

Aquilla. I cannot but feel some interest in a subject which has excited so much of my friend's enthusiasm, and I feel every wish to prosecute the inquiry: at the same time, I candidly admit that I have imbibed the opinions which are generally entertained and sanctioned by the divines of the present day.

Philander. I am convinced, that, however firmly rooted your prejudices may be on certain points, you will bring to this subject the true feelings of a Christian. "The justifications which are now advanced by Christians as excuses for their ignorance and neglect of the prophetic writings, are truly

unaccountable: the objection perpetually occurs, 'These are the secret things of God:' and this shallow pretext is made a covert for negligence, and in some instances for an affected Christian modesty, and to fix a charge of presumption on others who are anxious to search into and penetrate, if possible, the 'deep things of God,' as they are often called. But, is it true that Prophecy forms any part of 'the secret things of God?' Is it not, in fact, the transcript of his own revealed mind; and the very test on which he stays his own eternal sovereignty, and the truth of his Prophets, by solemnly asserting that all things shall come to pass, according to their words; and in declaring his mind to the Jews, and by them for the benefit of all generations then to come, did he not forcibly command every individual of the human race, to consider his message and to inquire into the meaning of what was 'the burden of the Lord.' I do not hesitate to state the conviction of my own mind, that without a knowledge of the prophetic writings, it is impossible that any man can entertain a just conception of the scheme of mercy by God, for the benefit of man, or of the ultimate results of the mysterious dispensation under which we now live. I am equally convinced, that, through a similar ignorance of the nature and power of the language of symbols, the most unfounded assertions are every day made, and the most erroneous opinions perpetually broached."*

Aquila. I have been ever accustomed to consider that the principal events which the Prophecies foretold have already received their fulfilment; and are recorded only as a standing evidence and argument of the truth of religion, against the objections of infidels. And with respect to those which remain unfulfilled, their accomplishment is removed at too remote a period to interest our inquiries.

Philander. In the objections which you have just advanced, I perceive *three* of the usual answers which are given to those who advocate the study of the Prophecies, and to which I will endeavour to reply with such arguments as may present themselves to my mind; and I hope I shall be enabled to convince you that such objections are wholly untenable from Scripture authority.

1. That the principal portion of Prophecy has already received its fulfilment.

2. That the unfulfilled is removed at too great a distance of time to interest our inquiries.

3. That the Prophecies were never intended to be under-

stood until after their accomplishment, as furnishing evidences of the truth of Revelation.

I feel little hesitation in replying to the *first* objection, in asserting as positively, that a very small portion of the Prophecies have received their final accomplishment. The error has arisen entirely from ignorance of the prophetic method, which will be found, on attentive examination, to be uniformly systematic; and which rule of Prophecy is laid down in Deut. xviii. 21, 22. There are few, if any, prophecies in the Scriptures which have in view only one event. The Prophet is charged with a "burden from the Lord;" the grand and ultimate object of which is to describe the events of "the latter days," in which nearly all the Prophecies centre: but the test of the truth of the Prophecy is a more immediate accomplishment. Take, for example, the promise of the land of Canaan, as an everlasting habitation and possession to the seed of Abraham; or the destruction of Babylon, Jer. l., li.; Isai. xiii., xiv. After reading the promise in the one case, and the prophetic denunciation in the other, and comparing it with the historical records which we possess; can any one deny that only a partial fulfilment of either has taken place? and if so, what must be the conclusion, but that the first part having been accomplished, most assuredly the latter will be completed to the very letter, in God's own time? "No one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate." (Isai. xxxiv. 16.)

The grand point in which all Prophecy is concentrated, both of the Old and New Testament, is the coming of our Lord in glory and majesty, the restoration of the Jews as a nation, and the destruction of the mystical Babylon; and then, *but not till then*, will the period arrive when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Isai. xi. 9.)

In reply to your *second* objection, I think you would find it difficult to produce even the shadow of a reason why the ultimate fulfilment, to which I have before referred, is necessarily removed beyond our generation; and I am persuaded, were the numerous individuals who urge this common-place excuse for neglecting the inquiry, narrowly to trace the motive which suggests it, and which they allow so blindly to operate on their conduct, they would find it proceeded from a cause they little suspected—a decided disinclination to believe "that the time is at hand." Of this truly it may be said, "they willingly are ignorant." (2 Pet. iii. 5.) And what does this truth teach us? That those who ought to be looking and longing for their Lord "are eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage." The summons for the marriage-supper has gone

forth; but the children of the kingdom are variously occupied, "and cannot come."

The cause of the infidelity of the church, on the subject of the second advent of our Lord, and the fulfilment of the many important prophecies connected with that glorious event, is well expressed in the words of Peter. "Where is the promise of his coming? *for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*" Notwithstanding all our high professions, our faith in God's word amounts to little more than practical atheism. If we do not altogether say the world, its elements, and its various forms of society, were originally formed and are held to their present condition *by chance*, we go far to believe that God has established a certain order of cause and effect, and has left the world to be thus governed, without any further interference on his part; and this system, as we imagine, continuing unaltered for so many revolving ages, furnishes us with conclusive proof on the subject. As if He who established and sustains this order of things *cannot*, or is now too weak or too indifferent to change it; as if He who created nature's laws, were not Lord also of nature. We boast much of our sagacity and intellect; but I am persuaded, that were our wisest and most prudent men severely to scrutinize and nicely analyze the motives which influence, and the basis upon which their most popular notions are founded, they would not only find them opposed to all *true philosophy*, but would themselves blush at the utter imbecility of all human wisdom. A child who is taught by the Spirit of God is a far better philosopher, and of a far higher order, than our wisest men who are not thus instructed. They lay down hypotheses, and form theories, assume their infallibility, and argue from these, instead of betaking themselves to a Grand First Cause, and *thence downwards*: they expect to bend the infinite wisdom and eternal purpose of God to their own puny wretched attempts to reduce them to their ideas of method and order; and thus it is that our wise men expend their nights, and days, and years, in trifles; their own learning and intellect proving stumbling-blocks; whilst the child of the Spirit grasps and comprehends the deepest truths, which can be known only to the spiritual mind. This is sufficient reason why God always speaks with such contempt of human wisdom, and why the simple minded, though a fool, shall utterly confound all the accumulated learning and research of every school established on such principles since the world began. Let reason follow in its proper place, and not presume to lead. If an individual's sight *follow* the rays of the sun's light on an object, he will see it with all the vividness of which his vision

is capable; but let him *oppose* himself to its rays, and it becomes confused and indistinct. As it is with the sun, the source of light, so is it with God, the fountain of all wisdom!

In reply to your *third* objection, there can be no doubt that one end for which the prophetic writings were designed, was to confirm the faith of the wavering church in all ages, and to furnish them with an unanswerable argument against the daring scepticism of infidels: indeed, but a slight acquaintance with the Prophecies themselves will prove to you, that they bear internal evidence that *this* was only a comparatively subordinate use, and not their grand and ultimate object. I have before remarked, nearly all, if not all, the Prophecies centre in the final overthrow of the present existing order of things, the establishment of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, and the “restitution of all things;” which fact being admitted—and none will deny it, who have even carelessly read them,—how can they be given exclusively for the confirmation of the faith of wavering Christians, when their grand accomplishment is at that period when faith itself will be changed into sight? Could Jonah’s prophetic mission to the inhabitants of Nineveh have been exclusively for the confirmation of the faith of believers? Or rather, was it not a threatening of punishment for their sins, for the sole purpose of instigating them to acts of humiliation and repentance? Was Noah’s prophetic voice to the Antediluvians for the confirmation of the faith of believers? Was it not rather a *witness against the wicked*, and a warning to them, that, if they repented, they likewise might be saved?

Do we not read, that Daniel learnt from books that the termination of the Jewish captivity in Babylon was at hand, and therefore set himself to prayer and fasting? and do we not read the heavenly approbation in the words of the angel who was sent to him? “O Daniel, greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee; for unto thee am I now sent; for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, *and I am come for thy words.*” (Dan. x. 11. 12.) And *because* he had diligently searched into these things, was the angel sent “to tell him (and the church after him), what should befall his people in the latter days.”

There can be no doubt that Simeon, and Anna the prophetess, and such as waited and expected the first advent of our Lord, had their hopes excited by the prophecy of the seventy weeks of Daniel; and that such an expectation existed generally amongst the Jews, and through them extended to the Heathen nations, history attests: and which anticipation of

the Jewish people for the appearance of their Messiah, was more immediately confirmed by John the Baptist's preparatory and prophetic mission.

Had the Christians of the first ages regarded the prophecy of our Lord, of the speedy destruction of Jerusalem, "only of use after its fulfilment to confirm their faith," they would have perished at the siege, as did the Jews; instead of availing themselves of Christ's warning, which *they believed*, and fled, and were saved. They put the true construction on his merciful prediction; and when they saw the signs of the times spoken of in Matt. xxiv. they took refuge in Pella, a village in the neighbourhood, and were exempt from the horrors which were transacted at Jerusalem, and which fell on the unbelieving Jews. So now, our gracious and glorious Head has revived this prophetic voice, that his true church may be apprised of "that strange act," which he is about to bring to pass on the nations of the earth, and of which the destruction of Jerusalem was but a feeble and imperfect type; and, notwithstanding all the infidel scoffing of our public papers and magazines, and the cool contempt and indifference of false brethren, the true church *will eventually give ear to it*, and *will* make ready to receive her Lord, who hath himself pronounced a peculiar blessing on those whom, when he comes, he shall find thus waiting for his appearance: "He will make him lord over his whole household." The old bottles cannot easily receive the new wine: yet there will be many, who, like the guileless Nathaniel, hastily question if "any good thing can come out of Nazareth," with a swelling heart will afterwards exclaim, "Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel."

Aquilla. I acknowledge, Philander, that in concurring with the opinions which I have expressed, I have probably rather too carelessly received the common notions on these subjects, as they have been taught, without examining how far they are consistent with Scripture; and until your remark suggested it to my mind, I really was not aware how ill prepared I am to give a sufficient reason why the latter days may *not* be close at hand.

Philander. I have little doubt but, in proportion to the reflection you give the subject, you will be convinced of the utter fallacy of resting on such unsupported assertions. A careful examination of the Prophecies will not only convince you that the great Head of the church intended to warn his true disciples, when these latter days should be at hand which were to precede the deliverance of his church, but that every sign spoken of by our Lord himself, or his Apostles, is mani-

festly before our eyes. Look at the political state of the European nations; the mystical Babylon; the consummation of that wicked apostacy; the state of the East; and then turn your eyes to the condition of the professing church at home, and to the ripeness for judgment which we see every where around us, and ask yourself if the time be not arrived, spoken of by all the Prophets, and by our blessed Lord himself, when the church is directed, after discerning these signs, to "look up and lift up her head, for her redemption draweth nigh. It is even at the doors."

Our infidel newspapers have unwittingly turned commentators of Scripture, fulfilling the predictions, that "men's hearts should fail them;"—"looking for the things which shall come upon the earth." And even in this privileged land of ours, where the true Gospel is preached, can you not apply each verse, as you read it, descriptive of these last times? "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come," &c. &c. (2 Tim. iii. 1.) Let us, however, see what light Scripture will throw on this subject.—In Gen. xviii. 17. we find God thus addresses Abraham, who at that time constituted the whole of the visible church; "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?"

Jer. xxiii. 20: "In the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly."

Dan. xii. 9, 10: "Go thy way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed *until the time of the end*, and none of the wicked shall understand, *but the wise shall understand.*"

Zech. xiv. 5—7: "And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee; and it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear nor dark. But it shall be one day, which shall be known to the Lord; not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light."

Hosea says, prophesying of that day, in chap. xiv., when God will heal the backsliding of Israel; ninth verse, "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things; prudent, and he shall know them?"

John xv. 15: "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

1 Thess. v. 2—5: "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when *they* shall say, Peace and safety, sudden destruction cometh upon them. But ye, brethren, are *not* in darkness that that day should overtake *you* as a thief: ye are all the children of light

and the children of the day; *we* are not of the night nor of darkness."

Rev. i. 3: "Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep (*observe*) those things which are written therein."

To the above quotations may be added, the prophetic character of the church, since its commencement in faithful Abraham down to the Revelation of John, and which prophetic office, as part of the priestly, the church *has not lost*, neither *will it* wholly lose it, although its faithlessness has well nigh forgotten it. But "by this also we know that the last times are come."

Aquilla. But is it not said, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels in heaven?" (Matt. xxiv. 36.) How, then, can we presume to fix so momentous a period, after such a prohibition to inquiry on this subject from our Lord himself?

Philander. I am astonished that such texts of Scripture, as you have now quoted, are ever produced to establish the opinions which you entertain; for it is very remarkable, that, in every instance where similar passages occur, the signs of the latter times are given with peculiar minuteness and force. Each chapter bearing its own evidence, that they were intended to warn those addressed, that it was not for *them* "to know the times and the seasons," but for the disciples upon whom the ends of the earth should come. For it is to be observed, that Christ never reproved his disciples for making the inquiry; but after directing their attention more immediately to their own time, concluded by the signs of the latter days. Christ says certainly, "But of that *day* and *hour* knoweth no man; no, not the angels of heaven; but my Father only;" and therefore I believe, of that *day* and *hour* no man or angel will know: but that the disciples should be forewarned of the *time*, we cannot but conclude, from the following quotation from the same chapter: "Now, learn a parable of the fig tree: when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh; so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily, I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." By which last verse I learn, that, as in the primary fulfilment of this prophecy, in the destruction of Jerusalem, the judgment almost immediately followed the signs—so in the last consummation, the generation in which they are perceivable to us will not pass, before we see the whole accomplished.

Many have objected to the application of the prediction in this xxivth chapter of Matthew to the destruction of Jerusalem, because the "Son of Man was not seen coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory:" that this more especially referred to the second advent, is really granted; but, at the same time, I have no doubt there was a foreshewing at that period also. It will not be suspected that Josephus, the Jewish historian, would record any fact that he supposed would add weight to the authenticity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; to whom he bore so unwilling, yet so important a testimony in his writings: yet he records in full, that, at the siege of Jerusalem, and all over the country of Judea, chariots and armies were seen fighting in the clouds, and besieging cities. [See also Tacitus Hist. lib. 5. c. 13.]

Aquila. And do you then deny that the present is a period of great "Gospel light," and that much progress has been effected in circulating Evangelical truth?

Philander. There can be no question, that, within the last thirty years, the knowledge of the Scripture has been much extended; but during that period, religion has been *in fashion*: its outward profession required few restraints but what would be paid by regard to common propriety of conduct. The persecutions which attended our fathers' religious career have now dwindled into tales for the nursery; and the consequence has been, during that period, a wide extension of *religious profession*, which is too readily mistaken for a corresponding growth of vital godliness. But the conclusion is opposed to the experience of the church, since its formation; and against the experience of human nature, since its creation. Can our soldiers become tried and hardy veterans by the state of inaction of winter quarters? Have our sailors obtained their character for bold and noble daring, otherwise than by becoming familiar with dangers and contention, and inured to toil? Is a state of ease consistent with moral improvement? Has not history presented us with an answer? Has not the downfall of every empire been preceded by a state of luxury and repose?—Methinks I can trace an astonishing resemblance between the present state of the church and that in which our Lord found it. The Pharisees were loudest in their zeal for the glory of God, when they took up stones against our Saviour, who, discerning the hypocrisy of their zeal, said to them, "If God were your Father, then would you love me: he that is of God, heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." And Satan has now so blended falsehood with truth, which has ever been his subtle device, when he could not openly oppose it, that it should seem almost

necessary, in the absence of persecution for Christ, to give some watchword to his followers, lest *they* become altogether confounded by this strange but general amalgamation. And what if that touchstone of true discipleship should be, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh?" The wise and the foolish virgins are now undistinguished by mortal eye; but should such a cry arise from the church, would not the wise virgins straightway arise, trim their lamps, and make ready to meet their Lord! whilst the foolish, unmindful of the summons, would slumber on, dreaming of their security, until they awake when the door is shut, with the despairing cry of "Lord, Lord, open unto us:" but, alas! it will then be too late; for when he invited, they turned a deaf ear to the gracious message; and now the door is forever closed: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but yet have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." Prov. i. 24—26. My brother, that summons is now going forth, of the coming of our Lord and King, from more than "one voice in the wilderness;" that the once despised Nazarene is coming to redeem the ignominy of his church, and exalt them to glory and honour. And how is the message received? Why, those whose professions ought to induce them eagerly to welcome the joyful tidings, are ready to stone the heralds; and whilst vociferating their attachment to the meek and lowly Saviour, they put their fingers into their ears (as the Jews did of old), when they hear of the expectation of his near approach, as their triumphant King. But by this do we know that the last times are come; for it is written, "*In the last days there shall come scoffers*, saying, "Where is the promise of his coming?" 2 Peter iii. 4.

Aquila. But surely, my friend, you will admit that preaching the Cross of Christ is the grand and fundamental doctrine of the Gospel, and ought to be kept more prominently in view than any other Divine truth.

Philander. Most assuredly it should be so: it is the grand foundation stone of the building; for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ:" but the foundation stone is not the superstructure; and I protest against that constant attention to one portion of the Gospel to the utter exclusion of the rest. We are to preach not merely the death of Christ, but, "his resurrection from the dead, and the life everlasting." But are we to suppose human nature so wonderfully improved, as to render the inquiry wholly unnecessary? "May we not be vehemently contending for the letter of a doctrine, whilst its spirit may be unknown to us?" Think you,

my brother, the Scribes and Pharisees, who sought to imbrue their hands in the blood of the Lord of Life, would not have considered you a very illiberal and ignorant enthusiast, had you lived in those times, and suggested to their views the possibility of their *not* being influenced, in their conduct, by pure zeal for the true worship of God? Do you not see that the Jewish nation, having in their dispensation the forms and types of the incarnation of the Son of God, crucified Him who was the concentrated object of them all? And is it not possible that *we*, whilst contending for some portion of our dispensation, to say, by our conduct and in our hearts, "We will not have Him to reign over us?" The Jews crucified the Prince of Glory, because he came not according to their expectations of his advent, although it was fully written of, in their Prophets; and the Gentile church, which, it is evident, is likewise to end in an apostacy, will reject Him the second time, because he comes not as their Scribes teach them to expect him. The stumbling-block of the Jews was *his humility*; the stumbling-block of the Gentiles will be *his glory*;—the two churches thus forming an awful analogy; with this exception,—the former, being an offence against the Son, will be forgiven; but the *latter*, constituting the rejection of the Holy Ghost in the spiritual dispensation, will not be forgiven. In each case the visible church regards the emblem, and discards the reality. The Gentile church seems as much blinded to the mystery of its rejection, as the Jewish church was in our Lord's time. The Mosaic economy was but the shadow of the blessings of our Lord's incarnation, which ushered in the everlasting Gospel: it was due, and was therefore first offered, to the Jews: it was "only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel that Christ was sent;" for "the promise was unto them and their children;" but they rejected the gracious offer. And it was therefore of *necessity* to preserve the truth on the earth, that God should seek another depository. The Jews refused the sacred trust, and God turned to the Gentiles. The glory of the millennial kingdom is by the same inheritance peculiarly the promise of the Gentile church; and to them there will be ample invitation to enter into the possession; but they will not give heed to the summons, and God will again turn to his ancient people. The Gospel! The Gospel! is as much shouted *now* as "Moses and the prophets" were of old: but churches lose sight of the true signification, of which the Law first and then the Gospel was the precursor, the freedom of the everlasting Gospel in the *former case*, and the glorious blessings of the millennial kingdom in the *latter*.

The present church is like the Pharisees of old; who have

come "to make clean the outside of the cup, and of the platter; and have not cleansed that first which is within the cup, that the outside may be clean also." This cometh of looking to man rather than God. "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." Christ said he "judged no man;" and yet it appears to me that every man now is sitting in judgment on his brother. The modern church seems to have wrested the power from the hand of God, and each party to have its "Shibboleth;" by which they coolly pronounce a man to be within, or exclude him from, the pale of salvation. If this be a truth, where are God's hidden ones?" If they are to be found amongst those of most *reputed* sanctity in the religious world, God in these last days hath changed his dispensations. There was but one family saved in Jericho, *and that was a harlot's*. Ten men were cleansed from leprosy, and only one returned to give thanks unto God, *and he was a despised Samaritan*. Christ chose *a blind beggar* to testify his name before the Jewish Sanhedrim; and passing by the master in Israel, who came to inquire of him, he revealed the mystery of his being the Son of God, to a "woman of Samaria, who was a sinner." In a word, whilst the Pharisees, who stood high in reputation, in the estimation of man, rejected Christ, he found disciples prepared to receive him in publicans and sinners. *And think you, Aquilla, there are no Pharisees now to reject the second coming, and no publicans and sinners to receive it?*

One of the many evil consequences resulting from this demarcation is, that those who have passed the *ordeal*, and are admitted within the invisible rendered visible by man; are apt to rest too securely in that, which at best is but the mere approbation of their fellow-sinners, which I find no where in Scripture inculcated, but the reverse; for it is written, "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you;" and thus they rarely suspect that their hearts may be wholly estranged from God; and devoted to this world, notwithstanding a most consistent walk in the sight of man. It is a great mistake, and pregnant with much evil; to suppose that we are to find the Pharisees of the present period answer to the same description of character that called forth so much of the censure of our Lord. The hypocrite of a *carnal* dispensation was a *carnal* reprobate, and the hypocrite of a *spiritual* dispensation will be found to be a *spiritual* reprobate.

Aquilla. You have drawn, Philander, a touching picture of the present era of the church, in your comparison with its state at the termination of the Jewish economy; and, I acknowledge, with more appearance of assimilation than I could imagine them capable of bearing. If such a picture be true, it is an

awful one indeed; and I will confess that I have been much impressed with the strong disinclination that exists in the minds of professing Christians, upon the subject of the SECOND ADVENT; but how is it that so many learned and pious divines have erred in these things? Upon what principle can it be accounted for?

Philander. Because they have "made the Scriptures of none effect by their traditions," falling into that error against which St. Paul cautioned the Colossians: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Col. ii. 8. The Mosaic economy was not more incumbered by Talmudical fables, than our Christian faith is perverted from the simple word of God. You will find the first inquiry now, not, What saith the word of God on this subject? but, What saith Mr. A——, or Dr. B.——? "*Have the rulers believed on Him?*" Thus have we, like the Jews of old, allowed the traditions of the Fathers and the precepts of men to be regarded as a better standard of orthodox faith than the Spirit of God, as discerned in his word; and few are aware how unsupported the general opinions are, on scriptural evidence, until they bring them to that test. "Have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" Matt. xxi. 16.

I protest against this system of pinning our faith on the sleeve of other men, and our opinions to the most popular magazines and reviews; which latter, I maintain, have quite a contrary effect to what is alleged. Instead of increasing and diffusing real knowledge, it reduces the number of those who otherwise would think for themselves. I grant it does extend a sort of colloquial—superficial—information which passes in society, and which a man may soon acquire from our periodicals, and practise with a tolerable share of assurance. But surely such thinking and judging, however it may answer the temporary purpose of the men of this world, ought not to be named amongst Christians; yet still nothing is more common than to have judgment pronounced on a work of the most vital importance, merely because it may have been severely criticized by a Review, not thinking that *it is possible* a religious work may be reviewed by an irreligious man, and *therefore* a most incompetent person. "Spiritual things are spiritually discerned:" unless, indeed, you maintain that a subject of religion may be handled equally well by an individual merely qualified by talent, as may any scientific or philosophical question; an idea so monstrous, however prevalent, that argument is thrown away in attempting to remove it. But this is only one of the manifestations of

that infidelity, with which the whole mass of society is infected.

Every review that I have read on this subject has rather been a review of the *writer* than the *work*. The latter has been generally quickly dismissed, to give place to cutting sarcasm and bitter irony. But "rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before." It ever has been thus, and ever will be, towards those who will boldly declare the truth in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

Aquila. Will you state to me the principal points in which you consider the present belief to be inconsistent with scriptural testimony?

Philander. With much pleasure; and in placing before you the dissimilarity in the doctrines taught by the "precepts of men," and those which I conceive are the true meaning of the Spirit, and which I believe was clearly defined and understood by the apostles of our Lord, and the fathers in the first ages of the church, I cannot adopt a better or clearer mode of distinction than my stating by own former opinions, in opposition to those which I now entertain, and which, I believe, will contain, with tolerable accuracy, the creed of the majority of our professing Christians; for which, you are aware, my friend, I was once a most strenuous advocate—"a Pharisee of the Pharisees."

The material points, I think, will be found in the following three heads; and if I am incorrect in stating them, you will be good enough to suggest wherein I am in error.

First, That the whole habitable globe is to be gradually evangelized, and that through the instrumentality of the present popular religious societies; and that no judgments are to be inflicted on the *living*, before the *end of the world*, because the inhabitants, progressively increasing in virtue and religion, are proportionably advancing in the divine favour.

Secondly, That when at length the "end of the world" arrives, the general resurrection will take place, of the just and of the unjust.

Thirdly, That after the day of judgment, which is generally understood to comprise a period of time (if not exactly confined to a duration of twenty-four hours, yet only sufficient to award the final destiny of each soul,) the present world will be utterly consumed, burnt up, and annihilated, and the souls of believers will "go up into heaven with Christ; and the souls of unbelievers will depart into hell, with the devil and his angels."

Before proceeding to state my belief on the above highly

important and interesting topics, will you correct me if I have in any respect misstated them?

Aquilla. I have nothing to object to in your statement of our belief; and I am prepared to listen, with much attention, to any arguments you may adduce, in support of a contrary position; I think you will find it somewhat difficult to confute our system, considering that it has received the sanction of the divines of the present and many preceding ages, and forms, indeed, the general belief of the church of Christ."

Philander. You say well, Aquilla, in "MANY of the preceding ages," which I unhesitatingly admit; but I must find a better and a higher authority than the sanction of our holy fathers in the church. I will admit no argument drawn from a corruptible and fallible source, whilst I can resort to the same high and unerring channel from which they draw all their knowledge.

I will not yield, therefore, to the authority of fathers, when I can go, like them, to the book of God, and have the same liberty of access to his directing and all-sufficient Spirit, to give me discernment. But, allowing this authority to be good, (and, unquestionably, it is much to be respected, in the absence of all higher,) the argument you ought to deduce from it, is quite opposite from that which you have drawn. It proves, on careful examination, the *very reverse*; for is it not to be admitted that the purest doctrines would be found in those authorities of the church, who lived nearest to the period in which the Christian Religion was established? And but a slight acquaintance with the history of the writings of the earliest fathers immediately succeeding the apostles themselves will furnish the reader with ample evidence, that, if we, eighteen hundred years after the foundation of our religion, can look back to accumulating centuries of increasing error, "as good authority" for persisting in our blindly adhering to the precepts of men, rather than give heed to the words of God, it was neither *their practice* nor *their belief*.

Indeed, it is well known to those acquainted with church history, that these doctrines which are now designated by the epithet of "New Light" were the universal and undisputed belief of the first three centuries of the Christian church; and it continued so, until the doctrine of the Millenarians became abused by wicked heretics, and the council which was called to put down the gross heresies which were then taught, in sinking the base superstructure, destroyed the foundation itself: in their resolute zeal to sweep away the error, they likewise struck down the truth.

Aquilla. Before entering further into the discussion, will

you be good enough to state simply your opinions, as opposed to the articles of belief which you have just named?

Philander. I beg pardon for my digression, but rest assured, that none will ever truly comprehend the glorious mysteries which they contain, until the Spirit of truth gives them discernment, and "anoints their eyes with eye-salve, that they may see;" as it is written in Isa. xxviii. 9, "Whom shall he teach knowledge, and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Those that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breast." Isai. xxix. 18: "Surely shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness: they also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding; and they that are unlearned, shall learn doctrine."

Endeavour to become a fool in your own eyes, that you may receive heavenly wisdom: this is the first important lesson, ere we are prepared for the Divine teaching. "If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." "The fear of the Lord is but the beginning of wisdom."

In opposition to the first, it is my belief that the Scriptures teach, that the object which the spread of the Gospel is intended to effect, *in our dispensation*, is for a *witness against the nations*; and *not* to convert them; and that the world will gradually increase in wickedness and crime, but more particularly that portion of the habitable globe the Roman earth, which contains the Papal Apostacy, until God shall be able no longer to endure such monstrous depravity, and "shall come out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth;" which he will do—first, by heavy visitations of his providence, on the papal nations, and then, more manifestly, by the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will consume the remnant with the infidel Antichrist, "by the brightness of his coming." In producing my authorities from the word of God, I beg you to observe, that I quote such texts, not as isolated proofs in support of my own particular opinions and tenets, but such as I believe to express the "mind of the Spirit," for which we are to search the Scriptures; for I maintain, that there is no error so pernicious, and which has proved so productive of evil consequences in the church, as that opinion, "That where a text can be produced, there a doctrine may be founded." Scripture must be quoted to support Scripture, and not to oppose it: neither can I admit any inferences deduced from single texts, if I do not see the particular doctrine inculcated, *from Genesis to Revelation*; and therefore you will not fall into the error, that the scriptural proofs which I now quote are the *only* instances which occur in support of my belief. I produce

them, more as expressions and declarations of doctrines, to which I find the *whole of the Scriptures* strictly corresponds. The following passages, I think, are all in which Christ has accompanied his command, of preaching the Gospel to all nations, with any approach to explanation for what end it was intended; and here it may be observed how gracious it was to withhold a knowledge of the ill success, according to man's apprehension, that would attend his obedience to the heavenly mandate, until the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled, when this mystery should be understood.

Matthew xxiv. 14: "And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come."

Luke xxiv. 47, 48: "And that repentance and remission of sin should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem; and ye are witnesses of these things."

Acts i. 8: "And ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

Mark xvi. 15, 16: "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel unto every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned."

To assist us in attaching the true meaning to the above, let us consult other parts of Scripture, and commence with the prophetic inquiry of our blessed Lord himself.—

Luke xviii. 8: "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith upon the earth?"

Psalms ii. 2, 9: "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron: thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Psalms xlv. 51: "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty! Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, whereby the people do fall under thee."

Isaiah xxiv: "Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: the haughty people of the earth do languish: the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left. And it shall come to pass *in that day*, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth *upon the earth*." IN WHAT DAY?—Ver. 23:

"When the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously."

Isaiah xiii. 9—12: "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir."

Isaiah xxxiv: "Let the earth hear; and all that is therein: for the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations; his fury upon all their armies: the sword of the Lord is filled with blood; for it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompense for the controversy of Zion."

Joel iii. 13: "Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe: come, get ye down; for the press is full, the fats overflow, for their wickedness is great."

Isaiah xxvi. 20, 21: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity."

2 Thess. i. 7, 8: "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2 Thess. ii. 7, 8: "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders."

Rev. xi. 18: "And the nations were angry; and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great, and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth."

Rev. xvi. 19: "And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came into remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail: for the plague thereof was exceedingly great."

I have no illustration to offer to the above. I simply ask the question, who, believing in the Divine inspiration of the

Bible, reading attentively the above passages and their contexts; and all Scripture breathes the same strain; who can maintain, in opposition to the direct word of God, that, when Christ cometh, he will find the world evangelized? Are not the contrary conclusions obvious, that there will be so little faith as to make it a question if there be even *any*? And who will affirm, that when he comes, he will *not* come in judgment? If you persist in your present belief, you contradict the testimony of the Holy Ghost.

Aquila. You appear to have made out a very strong case; and though I am not prepared to refute your conclusions, yet, previously to my yielding my assent to them, I should like to ponder over the matter. Indeed, I think hasty changes, both of opinions and characters, are generally to be regarded with some degree of doubt. I refer more particularly to the subject of religion, wherein observation has taught me to prefer the gradual, it may be apparently slow, growth of the Christian character, to that hasty assumption of Christian experience which we sometimes find in young converts.

Philander. I fully accede to the propriety of your remarks; and I am more satisfied with your assurance to "ponder over the matter," than by an immediate concurrence with my opinions. I wish I could obtain the ear of as patient listeners as my friend has proved himself; and I am well assured I should at least secure sincere examiners. And let us not forget the example of the Bereans, "who were more noble than those at Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so; and *therefore*" (it is recorded) "many of them believed."—But to proceed: The common expression, the "*end of the world*," and which is understood to mean its conflagration and annihilation, I believe has been elsewhere* satisfactorily proved to be the end of this "*age*" or "*dispensation*," and *not* of the material visible world, which, I shall have to prove, in my answer under the third head, is *not* to be annihilated. My purpose I now confine to produce scriptural evidence, that, at that period, which all will admit is at the next coming of our blessed Lord, the *general* resurrection does not take place, but the first resurrection *only*, perfectly distinct from the *second*, or general resurrection, both as respects *time* and *character*, inasmuch as the first applies to the saints only, and is at the commencement of the *Millennium*; and the second includes all that have ever lived upon the earth, and

* See Basilicus' Letters on the Scriptural Expectation of the Church. See Vol. 1st of the Literalist.

takes place at the *end* of the Millennium. Under this head, I shall not occupy much of your time by various quotations from Scripture, contenting myself with only *one*, which is so distinct and conclusive, that, if language means any thing at all, two opinions can scarcely be supposed to exist upon the interpretation of this passage, however others may be open to the ingenuity of those who are determined to wrest the Scriptures to suit their own views. And here I cannot refrain from remarking, with what little consistency the charge rests on us, of explaining the word of God to apply to particular doctrines, and with how much greater propriety the accusation remains on our accusers; for it is the very principle of our interpretation, that its plain and obvious meaning is to be taken literally, unless the connexion points out its figurative character. We do not constrain, but rather endeavour to prevent constraint. The passage to which I will refer you is Rev. xx. 4, 5: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again, until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection."—Such a plain declaration needs no attempt at explanation; and when I find nothing in Scripture to oppose the only intelligible conclusion which every one must draw from such a simple and unequivocal statement of facts, but, on the contrary, collateral proofs in support of it, I feel no hesitation in believing the words of that book, which I hold in my faith with more reverence because it is our blessed Lord himself, the great Head of the church, who has peculiarly identified himself with it; and that he regards it as more highly important than any previous prophetic communication we may collect from the prefatory blessing pronounced on him "that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy" (Rev. i. 3), and the concluding denunciation on "any man that shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy," in Rev. xxii. 19. Until good and sufficient reasons therefore are rendered me, why I should attach a different interpretation to what the words evidently convey, I am content to rest my belief on this declaration of my blessed Lord himself; and that, at the first resurrection, only the saints will be raised, and be re-united to their glorious bodies, and "will reign with Christ a thousand years on the earth;" and *this* is that glorious King "who shall reign in righteousness," and *these* are those "princes who shall rule in

judgment" (Is. xxxii. 1), spoken of by all the Prophets, the burden of every inspired writer from Moses to St. John. I fear to enlarge on this soul-reviving object of our hope and expectation—the exchange of this "corruptible for incorruption,"—lest the interesting inquiry should induce me to wander from my present purpose, yet I am bold to affirm, that there is no opinion so false as that we hear continually urged in this age of pretension, than that these things form part of the *hidden mysteries* of God, which we are not to presume to search into. The arch deceiver! he knows they are our most valuable jewels; and, as his custom is, he leaves us to amuse ourselves with fancied treasures, whilst his arts are directed to conceal from our view the "*true riches*."—There is much revealed on this subject, as well as upon many others deeply interesting to the Christian, *purposely hid* from the careless indifferent inquirer, but which God, by his Holy Spirit, whose express office it is to "shew things to come" (John xvi. 13), *will reveal* to those who inquire reverently, with simplicity of mind, and singleness of eye. My brother, God forbid that we should be like those Hebrews who needed "to be taught again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." Why should we continue children in knowledge all our lives? And if we wish to learn what this strong meat consisted of, let us consult St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, and we shall find that it was no other than this despised doctrine of the Melchizedec reign of Christ on the earth: see chap. v.—vii.; of which Paul acknowledges to the Hebrews, "They are things hard to be uttered, seeing they were dull of hearing;" and St. Peter assures us likewise, that these "things were hard to be understood." What wonder is it then, that, if the primitive Christians could scarcely attain sufficient spiritual strength to feed on such food, and were for their weakness reproved by the two apostles, that the church, in its present sickly condition, should reject such food as wholly incompatible to its digestive powers? What wonder that we who can scarcely take milk should refuse strong meat!

Aquilla. The passage you have quoted from Revelations appears to carry with it conviction on this point; and I cannot withhold my full consent to your deductions. I am anxious to hear how you establish your opinion of the continued existence of this globe. At the same time, I protest against any alterations of our English version: I think too much respect cannot be paid to our present translation.

Philander. Forgive me, my dear Aquilla, if I differ from you in your last observation: too much respect *may* be extended to

our or to any version of the Holy Scriptures. I would approach such ground reverently, and observe a most jealous caution: yet I would rather be influenced by a pure desire to learn "the mind of the Spirit," than pay undue deference to any version authorized by man. Our translation is so excellent and generally so correct that I should tremble to see any revision attempted; and yet it would betray a blind and ignorant prejudice, to pronounce it faultless: and where a few mistranslations can be detected by the classical scholar, they are such as not to affect, in the slightest manner, the grand doctrines of salvation; but, on the contrary, a more correct rendering would make many important passages unanswerable, which are now open to the doubts and obscurities of the seep-tic. I will instance one passage in support of my observation; the expression in 2 Pet. i. 1; "of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ," should have been thus translated, "of God our Saviour Jesus Christ;" and it has been well observed, "that St. Peter calls *Jesus God*, in the most proper term."* And this same error has occurred in many other of the Epistles, which, if corrected, would furnish every Christian, however illiterate, with a ready answer to the sophistry of the Socinians. It has been most clearly proved, that in very many instances in which "*world*" occurs in the New Testament, it does not mean this visible world; but, variously, the class of men usually denominated the world, in contradistinction to the Church. In this sense we are to understand Christ, when he says, in John xvii. 9, "I pray for them (his disciples): I pray not for the world," or, we interpret the term, the Roman earth; as in Luke ii. 1: "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed." Now, it is very evident that Augustus could not tax all the world, for only a portion of it was known to the Romans at that time; and could refer to no other nation, known or unknown, which was not under the Roman government. Also, in Heb. ix. 26, the original word does not convey the meaning which we attach to "*the world*:" it should be thus; "Now once in the end of the *age* (or *dispensation*) hath he appeared, to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself." I offer these observations, because I think many good people possess a species of idolatry for the English translation of the word of God; preferring it to "the mind of the Spirit," which ought to be more highly revered than any human authority.

These observations introduce me to the *third* head of doctrine, wherein I shall have to maintain that this globe is *not* to be annihilated. Be good enough to refer to the following.—

* Baxter's Comprehensive Bible.

Psalm xciii. 1: "The world also is established, that it cannot be moved."

Psalm xevi. 10: "The world also shall be established that it shall not be moved."

Psalm civ. 5: "Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever."

Psalm lxxviii. 69: "The earth, which he hath established for ever."

Now, in further support of the simple doctrine laid down in the above passages, I beg to refer you to Dan. ii. 44: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms; and it shall stand for ever."

Dan. vii. 13, 14: "I saw in the night visions, and beheld one like the Son of Man come with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

1 Cor. xv. 24, 25: "Then cometh the end, when he (that is, Jesus Christ) shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet."

These prophecies all refer to a kingdom to be established *upon the earth*; and the latter glances at the *end* of the Millennium; and yet I can learn nothing of *annihilation* of the material world by fire. "The grand work of *redemption* is to manifest the goodness of the work of creation,"—to *recover* and not to *destroy*. How can a thing be *redeemed* which is annihilated? If it were so, Satan, and not God, would have the triumph; for he would have succeeded in the *destruction* of one of God's works.

Aquila. But does not the following text from the inspired Psalmist, rather interfere with the conclusions which you are drawing from your quotations? Psalm cii. 25—27: "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands: *they shall perish*, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."* Also in Rev. xxi. 1: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first

* See Charnock on the Attributes, Discourse VI, for an explanation of this text.

heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." Pray, how can you view these texts, in connexion with your quotations? Do they not altogether contradict your position?

Philander. Certainly not; but confirm it, as St. Paul and St. Peter shall satisfactorily prove to you; and I pray you to pay particular attention to their explanations of this same passage. St. Peter (2 Pet. iii. 6, 11), quoting this text, says, "Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, *perished*." Verse 11; Seeing, then, that all these things shall be *dissolved*, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be *dissolved*, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." Compare this passage with St. Paul's quotation of the same text, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, and I think you will find no difficulty in concluding that both St. Paul and St. Peter understood the term "*perish*" as only a material alteration in the outward visible form of the earth, and that can be effected by fire in the *second* destruction, as it was in the *first* by water, without moving the foundations of the earth, much less annihilating the whole globe.

Aquilla. There still remains one interesting subject, which branches out of your third division, and which, I have observed, is regarded with more prejudice by many professing Christians than any other which your belief embraces—the *personal reign of Christ on the earth*. I shall feel indebted to you if you would favour me with the Scripture evidence on which this part of your faith is grounded, although my present opinions rather incline to the truth of the doctrine.

Philander. My omission in minutely adverting to this topic has been intentional. I purposely avoided a more particular allusion than the nature of our various discussions absolutely required. Aware of the popular prejudice against this scriptural truth, I did not feel quite assured that even my friend Aquilla would patiently hear me, in attempting to establish this point; neither did I feel much inclined to expose a doctrine which I hold so near my heart, to the customary scorn and mockery with which it is generally received; and that proceeding from an affected anxiety that the character of our blessed Saviour should not suffer, as they are pleased to say, by a belief so derogatory to his glory, and so degrading to their notions, of the future inheritance of the saints. But, are we not to look for light in this revealed truth, in "the law and the testimony," rather than "the traditions of the elders?" I

feel no hesitation in saying, that, notwithstanding all our zeal for the circulation of the holy Scriptures (and it is a zeal well deserving of commendation) the practical belief of the professing church in the Bible—as proceeding directly and immediately by inspiration of the Holy Ghost—was never at a lower ebb. We know not what it is to tremble at the word of God, and to receive it into our faith with simplicity of mind—and that more especially if it should be opposed to our own preconceived opinions. It is true there is a sort of superstitious fear, as respects many parts of God's holy word, which he hath vouchsafed us for our instruction; and which is manifested in that slavish dread which renders it unapproachable, and thus entirely defeats the gracious purposes for which it was designed. But this feeling is far removed from *true reverence*.—In suggesting to your reflection a few texts which occur to me, as applicable to your inquiry, I will offer no argument drawn from human ingenuity. I would, however, make one preliminary remark, that, if Christ and his church are to be attenuated into a merely spiritual existence of happiness and glory in the eternal ages, it should seem an unnecessary provision, or, rather, incumbrance, of Divine Providence, that Christ should still retain his glorified human nature, consisting of tangible “flesh and bones,” as we learn from Luke xxiv. 39; and that his saints should look forward to the *consummation* of their happiness *on their re-union to their bodies*, at the first resurrection. It was the object to which St. Paul aspired: “if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” Phil. iii. 11. It was the bright hope held out by Christ himself, as an encouragement to his suffering church,” “And he that overcometh, and keep my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of my Father; and I will give him the morning star,” and constituted the blissful anticipation of the church now in heaven, forming the choral of the glorious company of martyrs, “And we shall reign on the earth.” Rev. v. 10. Indeed, all Scripture proves, that this despised doctrine “of the personal reign of Christ with his saints on the earth,” was the grand hope and expectation which our great Head intended should, and is, to those who receive it, eminently calculated, and peculiarly adopted, for encouragement to their faith, during their hard contest with Satan, the world, and the flesh: the character of the hope set before us being admirably adjusted to the form of trial: and, moreover, of the state *beyond*—after the millennial reign—when “the kingdom is delivered up to the Father,” there is little or nothing revealed. The im-

mediate succeeding future state approaches in its enjoyments nearer to our present sympathies than we are aware of. But we have allowed ourselves to be beguiled by Satan; and, instead of keeping this in the eye of faith, we deem it of little value, and have formed for ourselves an ideal state of happiness, in a remoter dispensation, of which I have little doubt, in our present state of existence, our faculties are not capable of containing even one solitary conception. And what is the consequence of our thus presumptuously rejecting God's scheme, and erecting one for ourselves? We are bewildered in fantasies of our own creating, upon which our hopes can take no hold; and thus it comes to pass, that, having no heavenly estate upon which our thoughts can dwell with delight, we lose the expectation altogether, and become earthly minded, having our conversation in this world, and not where every Christian's ought to be, "in heaven; for where our treasure is, there will our heart be also." None but those who receive these true doctrines, contradictory as it may appear, can have an idea what a noble field for contemplation—what a range for lofty thought, they continually present to the mind. It is this belief alone that can introduce the Christian into that perfect freedom from the oppressive and degrading bondage of this world, *which all should have*, who are the free-born sons of an immortal King and heirs to the kingdom of glory. Ought the constant vicissitudes incumbent on this state of existence, to make even a transient impression on those who profess to have "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven?" Did we feel we were but "pilgrims and sojourners, having no continuing city, but seeking one to come;" and that we possessed an imperishable treasure in heaven; could we be so base, as to allow our affections even to glance at the mammon of this world, which we have such varied proofs is so calculated to degrade the mind, and corrupt, if not wholly destroy, every nobler faculty of the human soul? Should we suffer ourselves to be affected by the evanescent changes and temporary allurements of this life, were we ever conscious that we are of the royal family of Heaven? Alas! who are found now to exclaim with St. Paul, "None of these things move me; neither count I *my life* dear unto me, so that I finish my course with joy." And the reason *why* we are so much under the influence of "the things which are seen," is because we have lost sight of the land-marks of the Prophets and Apostles, which more clearly presented to our faith "the things which are *not* seen."

I will now read to you the texts to which I refer, and leave you to draw your own inferences. The first passage to which

I direct your attention, is that remarkable prophecy from which the Jewish nation drew their expectation of their glorious Messiah, who was to restore their kingdom; and it is necessary that you should bear in mind, what you can learn from any Jew, that they expected the Messiah, as a glorious prince, who should reign in visible splendour, on the literal throne of David; and, keeping this in view, I think we shall find, that the Prophets, and Christ himself, with his Apostles, confirmed this belief, which is now esteemed so capital an error.

1 Chron. xvii. 11—14: “And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me an house, and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son; and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee. But I will settle him in my house and in my kingdom for ever; and his throne shall be established for evermore.”

This prophecy was partially fulfilled in Solomon, king David’s son; but that it was not wholly accomplished in him, the following texts—still speaking of this King, of which Solomon was but a type—will sufficiently prove. Isaiah having prophesied about 250, Jeremiah about 380, and Daniel about 400 years after Solomon flourished.

Psalms lxxxix. 35—37: “Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.”

Isaiah ix. 7: “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever.”

Isaiah lix. 20: “*And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord.*”

Isaiah lx. 12, 13: “For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted; and I will make the place of my feet glorious.”

Jeremiah xxiii. 5, 6: “Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**”

Zech. vi. 12, 13: “Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man, whose name is the **BRANCH**: and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord;

even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne."

Zech. ix. 10: "And he shall speak peace unto the heathen; and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth."

Zech. xiv. 3, 4: "Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day on the mount of Olives." Verse 9: "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one."

Hosca iii. 4, 5: "And I said unto her, 'Thou shalt abide for me many days: for the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince; afterwards shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.'"

Zech. xiv. 17: "And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain."

Daniel ii. 44: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."

Luke i. 30—33: "And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

John i. 49: Nathaniel addresses Christ, and recognizes him in the following expression of his faith: "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel."

John xviii. 37: "Pilate, therefore, said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, 'Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.'"

It will be scarcely necessary to point out, even to a careless peruser of the New Testament, that this darling hope of the Jew was constantly in the view even of the disciples, who were continually urging him on this point; and he repeatedly taught them, that He, as well as they, must first suffer humiliation and death, before they inherited the kingdom. Even

after his resurrection, before his ascension, at the last interview, they still inquired of him, as you shall find by consulting with me, Acts i. 6, 7: "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him saying, Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power."

The train of argument adopted in the whole of the 2d chapter of Acts is so admirably calculated to produce conviction on this head, that it is weakening the effect to transcribe a portion of it. I cannot, however, refrain from directing your particular attention from the 29th to the 36th verses inclusive; keeping in your eye the drift of the Apostle's reasoning, That Christ must necessarily rise from the dead, as in him was to be fulfilled the prophecies given relative to David's Son, and yet David's Lord. "Men and brethren, let us freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens; but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Rev. xix. 11—16: "And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew but he himself. And he was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and

Lord of lords." Rev. xxii. 16: "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."

And now having directed your attention to a connected series of texts from the original prophecy down to Revelation, where Christ applies the expression, "I am the root and offspring of David" to himself; allow me to ask you to point out to me, in what epoch of the prophetic history, this Davidical reign is shadowed down to a mere *spiritual reign*; for surely in such case, the prophecies themselves to be faithful, must assume likewise a spiritual character.

For a fuller development of this glorious scheme of the final restitution of all things under our great Head and Captain, the Father of the age to come, I would refer you to the Book of Psalms, and especially to the iid, xth, xxivth, xxixth, xxxviith, lxvith, lxviiiith, lxxid, lxxxixth, xciiid, ciid, &c. &c., which are full of this doctrine, as also all the Prophets: and I will defy any man to read the greater portion of the Bible with understanding, who does not see the whole scheme of redemption centre in this comprehensive truth. I would also recommend you to read Mr. Irving's Preliminary Discourse to Ben Ezra, of which, it has been well observed, "*this age does not produce such a master-piece of theology.*"—Oh! how hath Satan beguiled us of our most noble privileges; of our most exalted promises! how has he degraded the truth by his base mimicry: and in man, perversely blind man, he has found a willing dupe. God teaches man by things, and by his providence, more than by words; so that every truth in nature contains the embryo of an eternal truth; so that things seen, are but the emblem of things yet unseen, but which alone are truly substantial: "for the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." Rom. i. 20. Even this Satan has imitated; but, as the deceiver has nothing good of his own, he has applied his malice to deface God's noble works; and I think it would not be found difficult to shew, that there scarcely exists one grand fundamental truth which he has not encumbered by his spurious attempts to imitate. He has invested many of his faithful servants with a sickly foretaste of the millennial rest, which we may perceive by their exemption from the primeval curse, "Thou shalt eat thy bread with the sweat of thy brow;" and in all the possessions of the men of this world, of which they are but the temporary usurpers. And the work is worthy of himself: it is the banquet of a charnel-house! And whilst he has invested his own servants with these habiliments of pride, how well has he succeeded in stigmatizing with disgrace and contempt the true followers of Christ! whereas, what is the

truth? His servants are truly abject, low and mean, succumbing to an inflexible tyrant, and a base usurper, for a few temporary, selfish, and ignoble possessions; while Christ's servants are the truly noble minded and great, disdaining compromise, and scorning all temptations to violate their fealty,—the true, and staunch, and faithful adherents of an absent, but beloved King,—an heroic band of devoted warriors, firm to their allegiance in the midst of general disaffection and revolt.

And now, my friend, I have one more argument to present to your mind, which I will not omit, in addition to the above authorities, because the church seems to require as much demonstration upon a subject of religion as upon any proposition of Euclid,—forgetting that, if such an unreasonable requisition were complied with in the inspired volume, it would wholly abolish the exercise of faith, and the divine teaching of the Holy Spirit, and render every truth and every prophecy determinable by clear-headed logical deductions.—My friend, we live in an age of sight and of evidence, and not of faith; the curse of unsanctified intellect, which is too wise and prudent to take any thing for granted simply because God says it. Our forefathers, I suppose, who believed God, did not possess the reasoning powers to which we have attained by our superior mode of education. I can scarcely repress my indignation, when I hear a mere boy, who has just escaped from the trammels of a schoolmaster, tell you, with all the gravity imaginable, that “*he has not sufficient evidence to convince his understanding of such and such a truth!*” which perhaps may have proceeded, in all its naked beauty, from the lips of Truth itself, confirmed by the united testimony of Apostles, and sealed with the blood of martyrs; and which, forsooth, because we live in an intellectual age, is to be exposed to indignity, by attempts at reducing it to the level of his diminutive intellect! “Oh! how strange, how passing strange,” that one who has made such proficiency in mathematics and logic, and can read Euripides and Cicero, should not comprehend infinity!—In this doctrine of the second advent, however, I am bold to affirm, that there is to be collected more satisfactory *proof* than in most prophetic truths; as if the Holy Ghost, foreseeing the scepticism of the church on this head, had provided for it an appropriate remedy. In order, therefore, to shew you, that the texts which I have quoted (amongst a variety) do, in fact, contain clearer evidence than accompanies many other prophetic announcements, I must beg your attention to the first advent of our Lord, which, I presume, you admit was personal.

Aquilla. Certainly; it has become an historical fact.

Philander. Supposing this fact was not admitted, I ask you

to shew me, from the Old Testament Prophets where this event is spoken of, any conclusive evidence to prove it to be a *personal* manifestation—I mean when his advent in humility is foretold, *unconnected with his glorious advent*; and whenever it is prophesied of an intimate connexion, the inference which you *must* draw for a personal accomplishment in the first instance, I elaim an equal right in support of a similar fulfilment in the second. If I were therefore disposed, for argument sake, to dispute a first personal advent, you would find that a careful examination of the Prophets would furnish you with slender proofs to support your position; and this circumstance adds incredible weight to the conclusion, that, if the first advent has been a personal and literal fulfilment, when even the prophecies themselves do not bear that obvious construction, then the second, most assuredly, will receive a precisely similar accomplishment, literally and truly, when such a collection of inspired authorities combine to give it this character. Christ came first to relieve his church from spiritual bondage; that is, from Levitical ordinances; he will come again in person, to liberate us from that bodily bondage which oppressed Paul, and will continue to afflict all his true church, until our Deliverer come to our emancipation.

Aquilla. There are one or two passages in the New Testament, which I think militates against your putting a literal construction on the texts which you have quoted; and on the authority of our Lord himself; and has hitherto furnished my mind with ample evidence that the kingdom of Christ will consist of merely a spiritual kingdom in the hearts, and influencing the lives, of the majority of mankind; and I believe this has been the general view entertained by Christians on the doctrine of the Millennium; that the church will then have the ascendancy over the world, which we now so palpably see invested in the latter.

Philander. I am happy, Aquilla, to find you are supporting your opinion by a reference to scriptural authority; for no doctrine or tenet in theology is to be held by mere assertion: but this is a mode of argument to which I have found few disposed to resort, whenever I have conversed on the subject; or, if referred to, the texts have been so frittered and explained away, as certainly to mean any thing but the idea which the language would convey, if adopted in the expression of other subjects. I am anxious to hear your authorities, and I will endeavour to reply to them. Before naming your texts, however, I would offer one remark on the prevalent notion, that the Millennium will merely consist of a high state of religious prosperity. I will direct your attention to three passages in

the Revelations, proving that this dominion of the *resurrection of the saints* over the earth is what we learn from Divine revelation on the subject. Christ is addressing the church at Thyatira, and says (Rev. ii. 26—28), “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: (and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers:) even as I received of my Father.” Rev. v. 10, the saints in heaven are rejoicing, saying, “And we shall reign on the earth.” Rev. xi. 18: “And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward *unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great*; and shouldst destroy them which destroy (or corrupt) the earth.” If the texts above mean any thing, it is, that every saint that has ever lived will participate in the glorious happiness of that day, when the sons of God will be manifested. I will just glance at Job’s and Daniel’s expectations on the same subject, and then await the proofs to which you have alluded. Job xix. 25—27: “For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though, after my kin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.” Dan. xii. 13: “But go thou thy way, till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.” Now, assuming the Millennium to be the blessed period to which these holy men directed their hopes; and if it is merely to consist of a higher state of perfection of the present spiritual dispensation—as you appear to maintain—what “part or lot” hath Job and Daniel in the matter? They were most wofully deceived, and will be most cruelly disappointed, in their participation of the joys of that happy time. If you deny that their hopes, expressed in the above passages, did refer to the Millennium, you must reject those portions of holy writ *in toto*, or find some other period of fulfilment, which I have yet to learn that any have had the hardihood to attempt. Thus we see the Prophets of old lived in the anticipation of these things; and that we do not, is one of the thousand signs of the times, that we have wholly perverted the truth and turned unto fables.

Aquilla. The passages to which I beg your attention, are the following:—Luke xvii. 20, 21: “And when he was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them, and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here!

or Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." Also, John xviii. 36: "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

Philander. I was fully prepared for these quotations; and I cannot omit noticing, that if I converse with one Christian on these subjects, I have conversed with all: for I uniformly meet with precisely similar objections and remarks, and founded on the same texts, except when the shallow evasion is presented to you, and which is most frequently the case, of a personal practical application to yourself. The correctness of this observation must occur to every one who has interested himself in the discussion of these doctrines; and it evidently detects the impoverished resources which those have who maintain an opposite opinion. To your first, I have thus to reply: You will observe, from whom the inquiry came, and to whom the answer is addressed—those Pharisees to whom Christ ever spoke in parables, and who were ignorant, negligent, and altogether destitute of that spiritual kingdom which has its seat in the believer's heart. For an illustration both of Christ's manner of address in this instance to the Pharisees, as also of his true meaning, I refer you to John iii. 5: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Ver. 9—12: "Nicodemus answered, and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" By which passage, and Luke xvii. 20, I learn two things: First, That it was necessary to receive the spiritual kingdom in the heart, "which cometh not by outward observation," before we can enter into the mysteries of the kingdom of God; and Christ's reply to the Pharisees was therefore most appropriate;—seeing that they lacked that which alone could introduce them to the kingdom for which they inquired. And secondly, I learn that Christ "threw not his pearls before swine: neither does he teach his own servants truths before he has prepared the soil of the heart for their reception and full comprehension, as we find in Nicodemus' case, who was undoubtedly a good man, and a sincere inquirer: and, mark me, though a ruler in Israel, a babe in knowledge, to whom our Saviour did not enter into discourse upon "heavenly things," seeing that he was dull of hearing, and could

not receive even "*earthly things.*" According to your views, therefore, the "*heavenly things*" which Christ in the above passages clearly applies to his kingdom, *will never* arrive; for you make the Millennium to consist only of a high state of spirituality, which Christ considers and teaches as being only "*earthly things.*"—You see into what perplexing dilemmas and direct contradictions of Scripture the popular notions on these subjects must inevitably introduce you; and what can more plainly mark them as Satan's deceptions, than that they are all opposed to the word of God?

Besides, the term "*within you,*" in the 21st verse of the chapter, reads in the margin "*among you;*" and in this sense, John the Baptist preached that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and *did* come to the Jews, though they saw it not. As he was a King then, though in disguise, so was his kingdom; not then manifest to outward observation: he had received the kingdom, but its possession was deferred. In this instance, as I am persuaded in every other particular of the first advent, our Lord's life contained the types of those things which shall be revealed at his second coming. The expressions also in John xviii. 36, "*My kingdom is not of this world;*" and, "*but now is my kingdom not from hence,*" furnish me, when closely examined, ample authority to reject your interpretation, as exclusively applicable to the spiritual kingdom, which every true disciple has within himself. The word *now* is undoubtedly significant of time present in contradistinction to the *future*, so that the present tense being used by our Lord. "*My kingdom is not, and now is my kingdom not from hence,*" do most clearly imply, by fair inference, that at some future period, *it will be from hence, and on this earth.*

And shall we say, that, because we admit to its fullest extent the truth of the spiritual kingdom in the heart, therefore there is no other kingdom? Does the invisible then necessarily destroy the visible? Certainly not—and we believe in both: but you receive the one, and reject the other. Pray do me the favour of reading at your leisure carefully a continuation of the passage from Luke xvii., and you will find, that our Saviour, though he spoke of a spiritual kingdom, without observation, *which then was*, yet likewise directed his disciples to a future kingdom, the manifest token of which he plainly foretels them.

To establish, however, the truth of this position, beyond all controversy, that the kingdom of God, which cometh without observation in Luke xvii. 20, is not intended by our Saviour to exclude the visible kingdom for which I am contending, without in the least infringing on the spiritual kingdom, to which you exclusively confine the expression, I refer you to Luke

xii. 31, 32: "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke xxii. 29: "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." It is evident that Christ was addressing those who had already received the spiritual kingdom in their hearts; and yet he directs their attention to a *future kingdom*, which they were to receive, and for which he teaches his disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." That this was the precise view entertained by the Apostle Paul on this subject, we can have little doubt, from his Epistle to the Ephesians, i. 13, 14: "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is *the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession*," which we know to be the "uttermost parts of the earth;" that is, we know this to be Christ's inheritance; and therefore *ours*. Thus the spiritual kingdom in the heart, in which we are contented to centre all our hopes and expectations, Paul only regarded as the *earnest*: the writings of the estate; but essentially necessary to qualify us to enter into its full possession.

Jesus Christ, when speaking of his kingdom, it is to be remarked, quoted the language of Daniel, and often represented it as *not* immediately at hand, or impending, *though on this earth*, as we shall find by the following, which I think, with what I have already advanced, will satisfy you in my reply to both your texts.

Mark xiii. 34—37: "For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye, therefore; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

Luke xix. 12, 13: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, *and to return*."

Luke xx. 9: "A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time."

Matt. xxv. 14: "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country." Verse 19: "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh."

You will find in every part of the prophecies, this kingdom,

which is to last for ever, is to subvert all other kingdoms, which are to "become like the chaff of the summer threshing floor, and the wind to carry them away, so that no place shall be found for them." Dan. ii. 35.

This cannot be realized at the present moment, as we see all these kingdoms still in existence; although politicians admit, neither does it require any assistance of the prophecies to perceive, that they are tottering to their base: and every thinking man is anxiously awaiting their final overthrow, little dreaming of the "everlasting kingdom" which is to be "*set up in the days of these kings,*" and upon their ruins. It follows, therefore, by consequence, and forms an important feature of the last times, that the establishment of this kingdom is indeed near at hand.

Aquilla. You press me so hard, that I am constrained to admit my complete defeat.

Philander. The second advent of our Lord in flesh, affords me a key to the fuller comprehension of the mystery of his humanity, which, before I entered into this doctrine, I never was able to attain unto. I now see the end for which Christ "took not upon him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham;" and has united human nature, to his eternal Godhead, the God-Man, the only manifestation of the blessed Trinity, *for whom*, as well as by whom, "all things were made, both in heaven and earth." To what heights of surpassing glory will those be raised "who are faithful unto death!" If Adam was pronounced by his Divine Maker, when he came forth from his hands, to be "very good," how far more glorious will that incorruptible body be which we receive from the Second Adam! Truly, "it hath never entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for those who love him;" seeing that he hath taken our own nature into his essential being.—God does every thing in order. The incarnation of the Son of God was the first stepping-stone towards the exaltation of human nature. The next grand effort in progression towards its high destiny, will be the millennial kingdom of Christ: what may constitute the next, in the Divine purpose, I know not; but this I know, that he that "overcometh and endureth unto the end" is an "heir of God, and joint heir of Christ;" who is now, as our earnest of the inheritance, "set down at the right hand of God, in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath all things put under his feet: "for," he says, "*all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*" Seeing then that God hath put no limits, who shall prescribe

man's noble destiny? Who will say his vicegerency shall not extend, yet, to the utmost reach of God's universe; to worlds, and systems of worlds, which now cannot find a place even in the thought of man?

Aquilla. It has often occurred to me, that the church, by losing sight of the risen humanity of Christ, has robbed itself of its grandest and most appropriate consolation. In this light, the views you entertain of the second advent strike me with peculiar propriety. There is certainly an incompleteness and insufficiency in the belief that Christ will again visit this earth, only to pronounce a hasty condemnation, and effect a speedy execution of annihilating judgment, wherein he endured with such patience and long suffering, the deepest humiliations and degradation from the powers of this world. It were but an unsatisfactory triumph, if he does not, on the very field of his sufferings defeat and baffle the enemies which then oppressed him, and his church after him; if he does not reign on the throne of his glory, triumphing over the world, and ruling the nations with the breath of his mouth. "And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." Isa. xi. 4.

Philander. I am delighted to see your mind is disenthralled from that egregious error—that Christ's dignity would be diminished by his again visiting this earth; by which it is conceived, that this world is so sunk in corruption, as to render its redemption from the curse out of God's power to effect, and therefore he must necessarily annihilate it. But who shall presume to call that unclean which God hath pronounced to be "very good." Who hath corrupted the earth? "Cursed be the ground, for thy sake," was a part of the original curse; and the inspired Apostle, four thousand years after, confirmed the same grand truth: "for true and righteous are thy judgments; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication." Rev. xix. 2. And we know that when "he hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand, and purified the earth by fire," that forthwith a new order of things will spring into creation, "wherein dwelleth righteousness." Did Christ then die to redeem only the souls of men? It were but a partial redemption, if *all* be not redeemed, which have fallen under the curse; *material* as well as *immaterial*.—Christ, we learn from St. Paul, is "to gather *all things* unto himself." But let us examine the consistency of this objection, and we shall find it wholly untenable. The same individuals will doubtless grant, that if they be the children of God, their bodies are become the temples of the Holy Ghost: "whose temple ye are, if ye abide in the faith." How comes it, my brethren,

that you so willingly allot that body of sin and death which is by nature so full of corruption, and all manner of abominations, as the habitation of one Person in the blessed Trinity; and so blindly contend, that the inanimate and unconscious earth is alone so irremediably sunk under the curse as to be wholly incapable of being renewed unto a fit and holy habitation for the Divine presence, in the second Person in the Trinity. In which, think ye, the mighty power of God is most manifest; in regenerating this perverse heart to righteousness and true holiness, by the "working of the Holy Ghost," or effecting a purification and redemption of the unresisting material world? It is true this visible creation fell from its pristine beauty and comeliness, when man, who was its responsible head, and destined for its lord, fell under his Creator's displeasure by disobedience: but, as in Adam, *all things* were included *under* the curse, so in Christ shall *all things* be redeemed *from* the curse. Then "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose: it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing." Isa. xxxv. 1. "The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands: instead of the thorn, shall come up the fir tree; and instead of the briar, shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." Isa. lv. 12, 13. And when he comes, how will he come? As a mighty Man of War! "The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man: he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea roar: he shall prevail against his enemies." Isa. xlii. 13. "And the Lord shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible, and who can abide it?" Joel ii. 11. "For the Lord most high is terrible: he is a great King over all the earth." God is gone up with a shout: for God is the King over all the earth." Psalm xlvii. See also Joel, chaps. ii. iii. "Hear, all ye people: hearken, O earth, and all that therein is; and let the Lord God be witness against you; yea, the Lord from his holy temple. For behold the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will *come down*, and tread upon the high places of the earth; and the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place." Micah i. 2—4. See also Isa. lxiii. 1—4. "Behold, I will send my Messenger; and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold,

he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming; and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." Malachi iii. 1, 2.

Having replied in regular order to the three divisions of your belief, you will allow me to enlarge on another prophetic truth, which the Gentile church seems wholly to have forgotten, or, with grasping selfishness, and the most perverse and blind misconstruction, has appropriated to herself. The restoration of the Jews, as a nation to their own land, which is immediately to precede, and continue, as the visible manifestation of that blessed period, "for which the whole creation groaneth and travaileth," except self-satisfied man! What a glorious order of things will then be established! Then will the Ten tribes suddenly emerge from their mysterious hiding place; and then also will blazen forth in glorious apparel, to the utter confusion of the infidel, the tens of thousands of saints who have been crying to God to "avenge their blood on them that dwell on the earth." Then will be revealed the true Cyrus, who will deliver his people from the Babylonish yoke; and having punished the princes, who oppressed his people, will he establish that kingdom spoken of by Daniel, which "shall never be destroyed:" of which, *the beloved city* shall be the centre. "There he shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." Then shall come to pass that Scripture, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." Isa. lx.

My difficulty in proving this truth from Scripture is not to search for passages, but to select the most appropriate from an almost innumerable collection.

Deut. xxx. 1: "And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, that the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee *from all the nations* whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. And the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which *thy fathers possessed*, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed; to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. And the Lord thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which per-

secuted thee; and thou shalt return and obey the voice of the Lord, and do all his commandments, which I command thee this day."

Isa. xiv. 1: "For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land; and the strangers shall be joined with them."

Isa. xxvii. 13: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem."

Isa. xxxiii. 20: "Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a *quiet habitation*, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down. Not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed; neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken."

Isa. lxxv. 18: "Behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy; and they shall build houses, and inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat; for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of my hands."

Jer. iii. 17: "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem."

Jer. xxxii. 37: "Behold I will gather them out of all countries whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly, with my whole heart, and with my whole soul."

Ezek. xxviii. 25, 26: "Thus saith the Lord God, When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered, and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, then shall they dwell in their land that I have given to my servant Jacob; and they shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses and plant vineyards; yea, they shall dwell with confidence when I have executed judgment upon all those that despise them round about them; and they shall know that I am the Lord their God."

Ezek. xxxvi. 24, 28, 33—35: "For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. Thus saith the Lord God, In the

day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, and desolate, and ruined cities, are become fenced, and are inhabited."

Ezek. xxxvii. 21, 22, 25, 27, 28: "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they and their children, and their children's children, for ever; and my servant David shall be their prince for ever. My tabernacle also shall be with them; yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore."

Zech. ii. 12: "And the Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again."

Zech. viii. 20, 23: "Thus said the Lord of Hosts; It shall yet come to pass that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities. The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts; I will go also; yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of Hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages, of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."

Zech. xiv. 16: "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up, of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem, to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, even upon them shall be no rain."

Malachi iii. 12: "And all nations shall call you blessed;

for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord God of Hosts."

Aquilla. The literal restoration of the Jews to their land, and their re-establishment in political power, I have never questioned. There does not appear to be a very great distinctness in those passages of Scripture which speak of the second coming, such as we meet in Revelations, i. 7: "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." If we compare this passage with many parts of the Old Testament prophecies, there appears to be a contradiction. For instance, take Isa. lxvi. 18, 19: "It shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues, and they shall come and see my glory, and I will set a sign among them: and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations; to Tarsish, Pul and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the isles afar off, *that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory*, and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles." I can scarcely reconcile the consistency of these two passages; for if the Second Advent be "when every eye shall see him," not only this portion of Isaiah, but many of the prophecies, appear contradictory and confused.

Philander. There is much force and propriety in your objection; and I believe it is one which has occasioned much perplexity to our modern commentators, and at one period was a serious difficulty to my mind, but which I have since overcome to my own satisfaction. I will simply suggest the idea to your consideration, and, admitting its truth, I think you will find a natural and easy solution of such apparently contradictory passages of Scripture. We find the first advent of our Lord spoken of by the Prophets in such intimate connexion with his second, that, until the fulfilment of the *first* had identified it, as being distinct and separate, it was utterly impossible to mark a distinguishing line: this was the universal method of the prophecies—a more grand and important event, projecting out of the immediate vision; and, as I have before observed, each successive fulfilment, containing the whole of the prophecy condensed, but yet complete in all its parts, *including* and shadowing forth a miniature representation of the final accomplishment. This must be so apparent to even a casual reader of the prophetic writings, that it is scarcely necessary to point out particular instances. For you can scarcely refer to a prophecy of the Messiah, but his humility and glory are most closely interwoven. It was this that misled the disciples themselves, who enjoyed the benefit of our Lord's personal instructions: much less should the Jews, as a nation, be

exempt from the error, when the Lord's immediate followers "trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel" *at that time*. Luke xxiv. 21. Looking back, therefore, on this as an established fact, why may we not find, to our dispensation, a third *manifestation* of Jesus Christ, distinct from the second, and yet so blended as to render it difficult to distinguish them? We shall find that a close examination of Scripture strengthens this idea. I have already established, to your full conviction, a second resurrection at the *end* of the Millennium, when all the dead shall be judged. I now direct your attention to Rev. xxii. 7: "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison." The 8th, 9th, and 10th verses contain an account of the last Apostacy. Verse 11: "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them: and I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." Now we know that *He* that sitteth on the great white throne is Jesus Christ; for the Father judgeth no man, having delivered all judgment unto the Son. And as Christ is the only manifestation of the Deity, it cannot hence be the Father, but the Son. Here, then, there is a plain succinct account; and on this authority, amongst others, I rest my belief. There are not many instances in the prophetic writings wherein the style descends to this minute description: nor are we to expect it. When God, however, has graciously condescended to give it, as an assistance to the devout inquirer, we are fully justified in bringing other prophecies to the test, and model our interpretation accordingly. Whenever I meet with separate passages which appear contradictory, I do not think I act wisely, because I cannot instantly reconcile them, to pronounce them as utterly incomprehensible, and virtually to believe neither: but I rather collect that there is a deep and important truth concealed, too precious to meet the eye of the indifferent inquirer, and which, whilst it confounds the self-sufficient sceptic, offers a rich reward to such as grudge not the patience and labour to extract the gem that lies concealed. For I am persuaded that, however difficult we may find it to connect many seeming inconsistencies, yet that the Scriptures will be found

to be an united chain of harmony and beauty. And were this simple rule more adhered to by Christians, we should not so continually hear the Bible pronounced a "sealed book," full of enigmatical mysteries and "dark sayings," which, I am persuaded, it never was the design of God that it should be, but rather to serve as "a lamp to our feet, and a light unto our path." Let any man, whose eyes are enlightened in the prophecies, compare this idea with Scripture, and I think he will find much to sanction it. The gift of prophecies and understanding mysteries, we know, is of the Spirit of God, and, like all other gifts of the Spirit, is personal, and *not communicable*. It is not to be conveyed by argument, nor to be transmitted from one Christian to another, except employed *as a means*, under the immediate influence of the Spirit himself to confer his own especial gift.

Aquilla. The idea which you have just opened to me is deserving of consideration, and I will not fail to give it. There is one reason often urged by Christians, who delay inquiry into these subjects, that "there is no time lost; and when these coming judgments shall be close at hand, the signs of their near approach will be so apparent, that sufficient time will be afforded them to get their house in order, ere the Master arrives."

Philander. Alas! alas! that such causes are assigned; but let not the church deceive herself. The antediluvians who scorned Noah's warning, *were also convinced* when the "windows of heaven were opened upon the earth; but it was then too late. God gave them ample time for repentance; but those who scorn his warning, and fly to him only for safety, will find that "God also will laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh." The Egyptian king, who hearkened not to the words of Moses, neither regarded the *peaceable* signs of his authority, hardened his heart when they came in *judgment*. Those who are saying by their conduct, "Shew us a sign of these things," may also learn another lesson from this king, whose magicians, working miracles and signs, by the power of Satan, confirmed him in his determined wickedness. *We likewise read of devils working miracles*; and let the church beware lest God gives her a sign, but gives it in judgment, for her infidelity.

Aquilla. I am much indebted to you, my dear friend, for many views of Scripture which have been opened to me in this conversation; and I admit, that generally your observations have struck me with much force. I cannot, however, wholly concur with you in your severe strictures on the present church; and though I am disposed to admit, in many instances, that there is too much cause for censure, yet is it, do you think,

quite becoming, or wise, to state so plainly your convictions; and is it, do you think, exhibiting that spirit of love which is the essence of the blessed Gospel? Are you not falling into the same error "of judging" which has just called forth so much of your animadversion?"

Phil. We must be careful, in our great anxiety to avoid the stigma of being considered censorious, that we do not fall into the other extreme of shrinking to declare the truth *from fear of man*, and thus connive at and sanction error. Universal commendation is not Christian love, but want of discrimination, or something worse. It is Satan's wily counterfeit, which he who is taught by the Spirit of wisdom may easily detect. The accommodation of the truth, to suit the prejudices and conveniences of men, is but little removed from temporizing with principle. We are grown so tender and delicate, that the naked truth cannot now be spoken without offence. We have a hundred consequences to dread, which troubled not the apostles and martyrs. A bold, faithful, and humble servant will perform his Lord's commands, and *not question their wisdom*; and yet nothing is more common, than to advocate the partial suppression of a faithful testimony with, "Is it quite wise to affirm so much, lest such a consequence result from so plain a declaration?" which, under the false guise of *love and humility*, presumptuously apologizes and qualifies the determinate will of God, and arrogantly sits in judgment on his eternal wisdom. But know ye not, that Satan can assume the appearance of an angel of light? It is this unhealthy squeamishness, this *false spirit of love*, this prudent temporizing with probable consequences, that have combined to introduce the church into its present state of "peace and safety," when the clouds are thickening around her, pregnant with sudden destruction and overwhelming judgments. God has various duties for his several servants: if all were to preach only of love and mercy, there would be none to "cry aloud" of righteousness and judgment to come. Which is *the true friend*? he that fearlessly tells a truth and warns of danger, or he that *sweetly* confirms an error, and lulls into false security? Which is the kind physician? he who cuts out the gangrenous part; or he who, from weak commiseration, relieves his patient with opiates, and glides him into the slumbers of death?

Think ye, there were no well instructed scribes in Jerusalem, and, to all human wisdom, far better calculated for the service of testifying before the learned doctors, when Christ sent the blind beggar? Doubtless they thought the beggar very unbecoming and presumptuous; and certainly such a fearless and most noble testimony was not squared by the modern cal-

culations of human policy and prudence: and not suspecting *what he saw*—though he had been blind, that they, with all their learning and wisdom, were blinder to the truth than he had previously been insensible to the light—no wonder, with such views, they exclaimed, “Dost thou teach us!” So now let the church beware lest they also reject the truth of God’s testimony, because the instrument may possibly like him, have been “altogether born in iniquity.” *But take ye heed, lest those whom ye think blind should see, and ye who think ye see prove to be blind.*

Aquilla. There is one common-place objection which is often urged, in opposition to those who so continually preach the second advent; “Wherein consists its practical good?”

Philander. I am sorry to say it is a common objection, and as wicked and presumptuous as it is ignorant. Are *we* to sit in judgment on God’s holy word, and dictate to him what is, and what is *not*, of practical tendency? It is sufficient for me to perceive that it was the grand, if not the only stimulus to watchfulness, perpetually urged by Christ and his Apostles.

The following examples—that the coming of the Lord was the continual incitement to watchfulness—are but a specimen of what abounds in the Gospels and Epistles.

Mark xiii. 34, 37: “Watch ye, therefore; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.”

1 Thess. v. 2, 6: “For yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night: therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”

2 Peter iii. 14: “Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”

Titus ii. 13: “Looking for that blessed hope, and even the glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Luke xii. 35, 36: “Let your loins be girded about, and your light burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord.”

And we know from the following passage that though he will, to the church and to the world, come *suddenly*, and as a thief, yet that there will be a faithful remnant, who will be waiting and longing for his appearing.

2 Tim. iv. 8: “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall

give me at *that day*; and not to me only, but *unto all them also that love his appearing*.

Heb. ix. 28: "And to them *that look for him* shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation."

The fact is, the church is fancying herself "rich, and increased with goods, and knows not that she is wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." God forbid that in that day I should be found clothed with one filthy rag of my own righteousness. Our eyes have been so much directed to the outward manifestation—the *visible* fruit—that we are fast falling into a forgetfulness of the inward visible work of grace in the heart; in our great anxiety and solicitude, as it were to force out some precocious and sickly fruit. Who knows not, that is not less than a babe, that "without holiness no man can see the Lord;" and yet for this reason, is our eye to be exclusively fixed in the *work*, and not rather on Him on whom its progress depends? Did Paul ask the Holy Ghost, who inspired his writings, "What was the *use* of the doctrine of salvation by grace alone, without the deeds of the law?" And did he quibble from an affected regard to the honour of God, about its probable practical tendency? What awful, impious presumption, under the false guise of humility! Who art thou, O man, who shall bandy words with thy Maker? Surely, the times are come, spoken of by Paul, in his Epistle to Timothy, "when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

"Prophecy unto us smooth things," say they; "prophecy deceits." But woe be to that shepherd who gives heed to the cry of their flocks. Woe be to "the dumb dogs that do not bark," as it is written in Ezekiel xxxiii. 2; 6: "When I bring a sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman; and if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet; and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand."

As God is my witness, I would not for any earthly consideration sustain the weight of responsibility which rests on those men, who, week after week, stand up in their pulpits, and so far from sounding the alarm of the coming judgments, systematically hide their report from the people's ears, and scorn those who do sound it. They amuse their hearers with ingenious religious essays, and intellectual sermons; and they are well pleased with them, saying, "Peace! peace!"

But is there no analogy to this in the history of God's providence? Hath God, then, never utterly confounded a church and nation, and visited them with a judicial blindness? What is that then that is written by Isaiah the Prophet? "For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath clothed your eyes: the *prophets, and your rulers, the seers hath he covered.* And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed." And has it not rather come to pass *also*, in our days, according to that saying of Christ? "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." And if it were not so, the following quotation from Luke's Gospel *would not be true.* "But let God be true, and every man a liar." "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also, as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. *Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.*"

Aquilla. Your conversation, Philander, has interested me more than I can express to you, and will furnish me with matter for reflection for some time to come. I cannot yield my assent, without maturer deliberation; but, in many respects, I have been fully convinced, as your reasons have been presented to my view: and in all you have advanced, your arguments appear so clear, that unless I am enabled to controvert them satisfactorily to my own mind, I can have no alternative than yielding my former opinions, however nearly they may approach to deeply rooted prejudices. In the mean time, accept my thanks, for directing my attention to subjects which I had admitted as established truths, and therefore never inquired into the stability of the foundation on which they were built,—on the word of God, which is the only true test to which all doctrines must be brought.

Phil. And with this assurance I must rest satisfied; for it is not mine to give you discernment to perceive, neither to bestow the believing heart to receive these glorious truths. It will be, however, at most fearful hazards that you slight the scriptural arguments which I have produced in support of the opinions I have advocated: for bear in mind that the "coming of the Lord," which I have this day set before you, is "no cunningly devised fable," no idle speculation of the brain,

or fanciful flight of the imagination, which the church may entertain, or discard, at her own option. It is either a grand and most important doctrine, or a fallacious and most dangerous heresy; in either case, well worthy of most weighty consideration. Suffer not yourself, neither allow others, to beguile themselves, and thus dismiss this most vital question with the careless admission of faith in the second advent, as a universal truth; neither with the customary evasion, that "it is enough for them to look to the day of their death." The Jews, who scourged and crucified "the King of Glory," would likewise have contended, whilst in the act of mocking Him "of whom prophets spake," and who was himself the fulfilment of all the prophets foretold, that they also believed in Christ, and waited for their Messiah. So now, it well becometh those who profess "not to be of this world," to take heed, lest they be found opposing the establishment of that kingdom, with the prayer in their mouths, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This inquiry does indeed assume the appearance of most momentous interest, and involves the most awful responsibility, when we learn, that those who refused to recognise John the Baptist's mission, who was sent "to prepare a people for the Lord," were found likewise to reject Him of whom he was but the harbinger. See Luke xx. 3—8. It does indeed become a subject deserving of most intense anxiety, lest that testimony which ought to *convince*, should be found to *condemn*. Behold! I can discern the feeble rays of a more brilliant day, which, as it advances, will dispel the "gross darkness" in which the world and its inhabitants are now enveloped, the deep and general gloom being but slightly varied by an occasional glimmering of a faint gleam of faith, scarcely distinguishable even to the surrounding darkness. Welcome, thrice welcome, blessed dawn of a more blessed day. Welcome, though it be but the partial foretaste which faith alone can apprehend, of that kingly dispensation, brighter and nobler far, as power and great glory is transcendently superior to suffering and humility. And if the great Head of the church be now directing her expectations to the crown; who is so base, who is so servile amongst us, as to spurn the glorious endowment?—It strikes me with the most profound astonishment when I see Christians disputing the offer of their rich inheritance with a perverse tenacity, as though their liberal Master were requiring them to submit to bondage and slavery, instead of opening the door and conducting them "to the glorious liberty of the sons of God." It seems to convey the murmurings of ill-requited service, rather than the expression of those glad hosannas with which heaven and earth will resound, and hail the

approach of their Eternal King. "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; let the fields be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord; for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth; he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." Ps. xevi. 11—13. This dulness of apprehension, this reluctance of belief, and coldness of heart, but ill accords with the sublime reception with which the inspired Psalmist anticipates this most glorious epoch in the history of the universe. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? the Lord, strong and mighty; the Lord, mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? the Lord of Hosts; he is the King of Glory?" Ps. xxiv. 7—10.

And now, Aquilla, I have this day witnessed a good confession before you, and not only to you, but to all who hear this sound of approaching judgment, and the kingdom of our Lord; and should none other ever reach them, than what this feeble voice contains, they will find themselves utterly without excuse, should "that day come upon them unawares, and overtake them in surfeiting and drunkenness, and CARES OF THIS LIFE." And what, think ye, those servants *who were bidden* will say, when they "see the poor, and the lame, and the halt, and the blind," sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb, and they themselves shut out?

"Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation:" fly, oh fly, unto the Saviour, whilst his hands are still extended to receive you, for "the time is at hand;" and if ye have not "laid hold on the hope set before you," how will ye exclaim, with bitterness of soul in that day. "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!"

Your blood, O reader! will be upon your own head. Take heed, therefore, that your loins be girt, your lamp trimmed, and your wedding garment prepared; for NOW hath the MIDNIGHT CRY entered also into your ears. "BEHOLD THE BRIDEGROOM COMETH!" "Amen! Even so, come, Lord Jesus."





